

2
ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 1 Part 1

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Papers Show Spy Ring Had Worldwide Scope

FBI Documents Tell of Contacts With Soviet Agents in Asia, Europe; High-Level Probe Urged

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WASHINGTON—The spy ring allegedly headed by John A. Walker Jr. was worldwide in its scope—stretching deep into secret naval operations in both the Pacific and Atlantic and including contacts with Soviet agents in Asia and Europe, according to newly released FBI documents.

With the latest disclosures in the investigation, retired Rear Adm. Gene LaRocque called Tuesday for a high-level inquiry into the loss of "very, very ultrasensitive" information to the Soviet Union.

The investigation led Monday to the arrest in San Francisco of Jerry A. Whitworth, a retired Navy radioman who lives in Davis, Calif., and the filing of court papers giving the most detailed account to date of the depth of the alleged espionage by a network of naval communications experts.

'Best Friend'

Whitworth was described as a "best friend" of Walker, the retired chief warrant officer arrested May 20 and identified by the FBI as the hub of the network. Walker's 22-year-old son, Michael Lance, a sailor on the aircraft carrier Nimitz, and his 50-year-old brother, Arthur J., a retired lieutenant commander, also have been arrested and charged with espionage.

According to FBI affidavits, investigators discovered letters in John Walker's Norfolk, Va., home indicating that he traveled to Hong Kong in 1977 and to the Philippines in 1978 at times coinciding with port calls of the Navy ships on which Whitworth served. On both occasions, the documents say, John Walker also met with Soviet agents. The papers also cited another meeting by Walker with Soviet agents in Vienna.

Previously filed FBI affidavits said that John Walker had relayed to the Soviets classified informa-

tion collected by his son on the Nimitz and by his brother, who worked for a defense contractor in the Norfolk area.

LaRocque, who now heads the Center for Defense Information, a private research group, said he was distressed that much of the classified information involved communications and secret codes.

"Communications are the very nerves of the naval system," he said in an interview. "They tell how the heart is going to react, how the muscles are going to react. It would be very damaging for the Soviets to know how our nerve system operates."

Pentagon spokesman Michael I. Burch declined Tuesday to discuss in detail any damage done by the alleged espionage. "The Navy has taken steps they believe are prudent to offset the loss," he said.

Questioned about his reluctance to give details about the impact of the alleged espionage, Burch said that the Soviet Union may not fully understand the information it has received and that the Pentagon is still unsure about what material the Soviets have. "So why fill in the pieces of the puzzle?" he asked.

Some Pentagon officials downplayed the indications that the espionage was widespread, noting that Whitworth retired after 23 years in the Navy as a senior chief radioman, which they said was not a high rank. But a government official with knowledge of the case disputed that evaluation.

"It isn't the rank," this official said. "It's the access, and they had access. There's no question about it. (John) Walker and Whitworth had highly secret access to codes and code-related information that has to be a primary target for the Soviets."

Meanwhile, FBI agents and Justice Department officials studied

the documents and other potential evidence obtained in searches of Whitworth's property and that of the Walkers, "consolidating" the fast-breaking case, as one put it.

As an indication of how rapidly the case has developed, the FBI affidavit filed in San Francisco gave three estimates of how long the espionage conspiracy had been under way. The criminal complaint against Whitworth listed the date of the offense as running from 1965 through October, 1983. But it also said that John Walker "began his espionage activities sometime around 1966-68" and said at another point that Whitworth and Walker began their association in the early 1970s.

Unless investigators get a break, sources familiar with their work said, they expect it will take some time to develop evidence necessary to arrest "F," who the FBI affidavit indicates is the fifth member of the alleged conspiracy.

Lack Evidence

The affidavit says Walker used the designations "D," "K," "S" and "F" for the sources of documents he allegedly turned over to the Soviets. The FBI has said that "D" referred to Whitworth, "K" to Arthur Walker and "S" to Michael Walker. A government source indicated Tuesday that agents believe they know the identity of "F" but as yet lack the evidence to bring charges.

In Fresno, the parents of a Navy friend of Whitworth's said that Whitworth had attempted to contact their son a few days ago to tell him that the FBI was searching his home and questioning him about spying.

Dave Olson and his wife said their son, Roger, became a good friend of Whitworth's when they served together in the Navy in the late 1950s and that both later attended Coalinga College, now Westhills College. They said their son was sailing his yacht in the South Pacific when Whitworth called. Mrs. Olson said she looks upon Whitworth as "a son" and described him as "a very caring, dear, sweet person."

Staff Writer Nancy Skelton in Los Angeles contributed to this story.